

East Jemez Resource Council Meeting

Meeting Minutes – August 1, 2002

Welcome and Introductions – Neil Weber (representing San Ildefonso Pueblo)

Neil Weber opened the East Jemez Resource Council (Council) meeting by welcoming new attendees, facilitating introductions, and briefly reviewing the meeting agenda.

EJRC Charter revisions and discussion – All

Neil Weber led a general discussion regarding the review and revision of the current Council Charter. The discussion focused on updating the membership listing and modifying the existing language to more accurately reflect the current function and intent of the Council. The changes are reflected in the revised Charter that accompanies these minutes. The goal is to ratify the changes at the next Council meeting on November 7, 2002.

Pajarito Plateau Watershed Partnership (PPWP) Working Group Update

Ken Mullen (Los Alamos National Laboratory [LANL])

The PPWP Working Group update was a two-part presentation including an overview of the Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) surface water quality standards, and an update on the Clean Water Act Section 319 Grant awarded to the PPWP. Ken explained how the State of New Mexico is more closely considering implementation and enforcement of TMDLs, and used sampling and analysis for PCB contamination as an example of possible changes. The Council briefly discussed the technical and regulatory issues associated with current analytical methods applied to sampling for PCB contamination. The analytical process that is legally required has higher detection limits and is less sensitive than a new PCB congener method that allows for detection of lower concentrations. Application of the new method has regulatory compliance implications for several federal and non-federal entities. Los Alamos National Laboratory currently complies with standards established for PCB contamination, but will continued to track and evaluate this analytical method issue.

The PPWP Working Group intends to use the current 319 Grant monies to explore storm water management options for Los Alamos using strategies currently being used by Santa Fe like detention basins, rain barrels, etc. Some Council members expressed concerns that such strategies may not work as well in Los Alamos given the kind of terrain and its nearly fully developed status.

The Council followed-up with a brief discussion about the flood control structures that were constructed on LANL lands following the Cerro Grande fire and whether or not the structures should be removed. A representative of DOE/NNSA Office of Los Alamos Site Operations (OLASO) commented that the administration is considering leaving the structures in place. A question was posed about whether or not these structures could concentrate contaminants over time and eventually compromise groundwater quality. A comment was made that the connection between the structures, contaminants, and the groundwater is not well understood. Finally, it was noted that the majority of contaminants in storm water are associated with fine suspended particles that pass through the existing structure during storm events.

Cultural Resources Working Group Update

Rory Gauthier (Bandelier National Monument)

Rory provided an update on the topics, issues and multi-agency tasks currently being considered by the Cultural Resources Working Group. The working group discussed efforts to build a trail to the Nogales Cliff House and cooperative efforts underway with Jemez Pueblo and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to plan a prescribed fire. San Ildefonso, Los Alamos County, LANL and DOE/NNSA continue to work cooperatively to implement the Land Conveyance and Transfer Project. Under a new Programmatic Agreement, LANL is in the process of assessing 580 buildings for eligibility as historic properties; currently a little over 100 of the buildings have been assessed. San Ildefonso and LANL continue to work on a project to assess and treat cultural resource sites that were burned during the Cerro Grande fire. National Park Service crews are conducting excavations behind the headquarters complex on the Valles Caldera National Preserve prior to installing a new potable water system. Bandelier National Monument is developing a newly funded cultural resources assessment and monitoring program that will initially deal with erosion issues on known sites. The goal of this program is to develop assessment techniques that are robust enough to deal with the variability inherent in assessment involving multiple individuals over extended periods of time. Finally, the working group continued to pursue the concept of establishing a multi-agency curatorial facility to be used to consolidate the storage and maintenance of prehistoric artifacts collected from the Pajarito Plateau in the past. The working group is preparing a draft proposal that is anticipated to be completed near the end of August that will make recommendations regarding the type and location of the proposed curatorial facility.

Status and Implications of Regional Drought – All

US Forest Service

The US Forest Service Jemez District reported that 10 summer grazing allotments were established to assist local cattle growers during the on-going drought. Five of the allotments did not get used, two were successfully stocked, and three were grazed with a reduced number of cattle.

Los Alamos National Laboratory

LANL reported that there are several studies being conducted that may provide some insight into the effects of the drought on regional and local wildlife populations. For example, results of spotlight surveys for large herbivores (elk and deer) suggest deer populations have increased possibly in response to the increase in foraging areas created by the Cerro Grande fire.

Pueblo de Cochiti

Pueblo de Cochiti reported that the drought conditions on the pueblo are extreme. Many more animals, including wild horses, are now observed near Cochiti Lake. The pueblo suggested that relocating the Rio Grande silvery minnow to higher quality waters upstream might be a more viable solution than releasing water from the Lake to support it downstream, especially since it is unknown how long the drought will last.

Roundtable Discussion – All

Bandelier National Monument (BNM)

Bandelier National Monument announced that, as of the middle of July, Steve Bone is the new superintendent of the park. Dennis Vasquez was reassigned to a regional position.

DOE/NNSA – Office of Los Alamos Site Operations (OLASO)

DOE/NNSA – OLASO responded to questions about the status of the TA-49 solid waste landfill planning effort. OLASO responded that a new landfill in that location was still under serious consideration, but that the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis is on hold until LANL land use and landfill siting issues can be appropriately discussed and resolved. In order for the proposed landfill to be constructed on LANL land, the University of California would have to verify the land was available and DOE/NNSA would have to release the land. If and when these issues are resolved, DOE/NNSA will begin a feasibility study and complete the NEPA process.

Los Alamos National Laboratory

LANL provided an update on environmental studies that are underway including monitoring forest and range responses to tree thinning, and exclosure plots to study post-Cerro Grande fire wildlife grazing impacts. DOE/NNSA and LANL are beginning the planning and scoping process for an environmental assessment for trails and trail use on LANL lands. Some of the initial issues under consideration include trail use and potential conflicts with security requirements and resources protection. Finally, LANL reported on the recent establishment of the Risk Reduction and Environmental Stewardship (RRES) Division being led by Acting Division Leader, Beverly Ramsey. The RRES Division is still undergoing some adjustments and was established in response to an institutional need to consolidating several of LANL's environmental organizations and functions.

Santa Clara Pueblo

Santa Clara Pueblo extended an invitation to Council members and participants to attend the Pueblo's celebration honoring their patron saint on Monday, August 12, 2002.

San Ildefonso Pueblo

San Ildefonso Pueblo announced the start of a six-week youth employment program involving the Pueblo and Santa Fe Indian School staff conducting biological surveys to get baseline data to evaluate impacts of LANL on the Pueblo.

Future Agenda Items and Closing – All

The following topics were proposed as agenda items for the August 1, 2002, EJRC meeting:

- EJRC Charter revisions and ratification
- Soliciting nominations or volunteers for EJRC Chair in 2003
- Working Group Updates
- Bandelier National Monument Cultural Resources Erosion Mitigations
- The role of the Laboratory's Citizens Advisory Board

Suggestions for additional agenda items will be solicited prior to the August meeting.